

R277-602 RECEIVED FINAL APPROVAL BY THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ON MAY 1, 2009 AND IS SCHEDULED TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE MAY 15, 2009 UTAH STATE BULLETIN, SUBJECT TO A 30-DAY COMMENT PERIOD, WITH A FIRST POSSIBLE EFFECTIVE DATE OF JUNE 22, 2009.

R277. Education, Administration.

R277- 602. Special Needs Scholarships - Funding and Procedures.

R277-602-1. Definitions.

A. "Agreed upon procedure" for purposes of this rule means the agreed upon procedure as provided for under Section 53A-1a-705(1)(b)(i)(B).

B. "Annual assessment" for purposes of this rule means a formal testing procedure carried out under prescribed and uniform conditions that measures students' academic progress, consistent with Section 53A-1a-705(1)(f).

C. "Appeal" for purposes of the rule means an opportunity to discuss/contest a final administrative decision consistent with and expressly limited to the procedures of this rule.

D. "Assessment team" means the individuals designated under Section 53A-1a-703(1).

E. "Audit of a private school" for purposes of this rule means a financial audit provided by an independent certified public accountant, as provided under Section 53A-1a-705(1)(b).

F. "Board" means the Utah State Board of Education.

G. "Days" means school days unless specifically designated otherwise in this rule.

H. "Disclosure to parents" for purposes of this rule means the express acknowledgments and acceptance required under Section 53A-1a-704(5) as part of parent application available through schools districts.

I. "Eligible student" for purposes of this rule means:

(1) the student's parent resides in Utah;

(2) the student has a disability as designated in 53A-1a-704(2)(b); and

(3) the student is school age.

(4) Eligible student also means that the student was enrolled in a public school in the school year prior to the school year in which the student will be enrolled in a private school, has an IEP and has obtained acceptance for admission to an eligible private school; and

(5) The requirement to be enrolled in a public school in the year prior and have an IEP does not apply if:

(a) the student is enrolled or has obtained acceptance for admission to an eligible private school that has previously served students with disabilities; and

(b) an assessment team is able to readily determine with reasonable certainty that the student has a disability and would qualify for special education services if enrolled in a public school and the appropriate level of special education services which would be provided were the student enrolled in a public school.

J. "Enrollment" for purposes of this rule means that the student has completed the school enrollment process, the school maintains required student enrollment information and documentation

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of age eligibility, the student is scheduled to receive services at the school, the student attends regularly, and has been accepted consistent with R277-419 and the student's IEP.

K. "Final administrative action" for purposes of this rule means the concluding action under Section 53A-1a-701 through 53A-1a-710 and this rule.

L. "Individual education program (IEP)" means a written statement for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with Board Special Education Rules and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

M. "Private school that has previously served students with disabilities" means a school that:

(1) has enrolled students within the last three years under the special needs scholarship program;

(2) has enrolled students within the last three years who have received special education services under Individual Services Plans (ISP from the school district where the school is geographically located; or

(3) can provide other evidence to the Board that is determinative of having enrolled students with disabilities within the last three years.

N. "Special Needs Scholarship Appeals Committee (Appeals Committee)" means a committee comprised of:

(1) the special needs scholarship coordinator;

(2) the USOE Special Education Director; and

(3) a Board-designated special education advocate.

O. "USOE" means the Utah State Office of Education.

P. "Warrant" means payment by check to a private school.

R277-602-2. Authority and Purpose.

A. This rule is authorized by Utah Constitution Article X, Section 3 which vests general control and supervision of the public school system under the Board, Section 53A-1a-706(5)(b) which provides for Board rules to establish timelines for payments to private schools, Section 53A-3-410(6)(b)(i)(c) which provides for criminal background checks for employees and volunteers, Section 53A-1a-707 which provides for Board rules about eligibility of students for scholarships and the application process for students to participate in the scholarship program, and by Section 53A-1-401(3) which allows the Board to adopt rules in accordance with its responsibilities.

B. The purpose of this rule is to outline responsibilities for parents/students, public schools, school districts or charter schools, and eligible private schools that accept scholarships from special needs students and the State Board of Education in providing choice for parents of special needs students who choose to have their children served in private schools and in providing accountability for the citizenry in the administration and

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distribution of the scholarship funds.

R277-602-3. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities.

A. If the student is enrolled in a public school or was enrolled in a public school in the year previous to the year in which the scholarship is sought, the parent/guardian shall submit an application, available from the USOE or online at www.usoe.org, to the school district or charter school within which the parent/guardian resides.

(1) The parent shall complete all required information on the application and submit the following documentation with the application form:

(a) documentation that the parent/guardian is a resident of the state of Utah;

(b) documentation that the student is at least five years of age before September 2 of the year of enrollment, consistent with Section 53A-3-402(6);

(c) documentation that the student is not more than 21 years of age and has not graduated from high school consistent with Section 53A-15-301(1)(a);

(d) documentation that the student has satisfied R277-602-3A or B; and

(e) documentation that the student has official acceptance at an eligible private school, as defined under Section 53A-1a-705;

(2) The parent shall sign the acknowledgments and refusal to consent to services on the application form consistent with Section 53A-1a-704.

(3) Any intentional falsification, misinformation, or incomplete information provided on the application may result in the cancellation of the scholarship to the student and non-payment to the private school.

B. If the student was not enrolled in a public school in the year previous to the year in which the scholarship is sought, the parent/guardian shall submit an application to the school district in which the private school is geographically located (school district responsible for child find under IDEA, Sec. 612(a)(3)).

(1) The parent shall complete all required information on the application and submit the following documentation with application form:

(a) documentation that the parent/guardian is a resident of the state of Utah;

(b) documentation that the student is at least five years of age, before September 2 of the year of enrollment;

(c) documentation that the student is not more than 21 years of age and has not graduated from high school consistent with Section 53A-15-301(1)(a);

(d) documentation that the student has satisfied R277-602-3A or B; and

(e) documentation that the student has official acceptance at

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an eligible private school, as defined under Section 53A-1a-705.

(2) The parent shall sign the acknowledgments and refusal to consent to services on the application form consistent with Section 53A-1a-704.

(3) The parent shall provide documentation of student's enrollment in an eligible private school as defined under Section 53A-1a-705;

(4) The parent shall participate in an assessment team meeting to determine if a student would qualify for special education services and the level of services for which the student would be eligible if enrolled in a public school.

C. Payment provisions

(1) The parent of a special needs scholarship student whose application is received on or before July 1 shall be eligible for quarterly scholarship payments equal to no more than the amount established in Section 53A-1a-706(2), with payments beginning on September 1.

(2) The parent of a special needs scholarship student whose application is received after July 1, but on or before September 1 shall be eligible for quarterly scholarship payments equal to no more than three-fourths of the amount established in Section 53A-1a-706(2), with payments beginning on November 1.

(3) The parent of a special needs scholarship student whose application is received after September 1, but on or before November 1 shall be eligible for quarterly scholarship payments equal to no more than one-half of the amount established in Section 53A-1a-706(2), with payments beginning on February 1.

(4) The parent of a special needs scholarship student whose application is received on or before February 15 shall be eligible for quarterly scholarship payments equal to no more than one-fourth of the amount established in Section 53A-1a-706(2), with payments beginning on April 15.

D. A special needs scholarship shall be effective for three years subject to renewal under Section 53A-1a-704(6).

E. The parent shall, consistent with Section 53A-1a-706(8), endorse the warrant received by the private school from the USOE no more than 15 school days after the private school's receipt of the warrant.

F. The parent shall notify the Board in writing within five days if:

(1) the student does not continue in enrollment in an eligible private school for any reason including parent/student choice, suspension or expulsion of the student; or

(2) the student misses more than 10 consecutive days at which point the Board may modify the payment to the private school consistent with R277-419-1J.

G. The parent shall cooperate and respond within 10 days to an enrollment cross-checking request from the Board.

H. The parent shall notify the Board in writing by July 1 in

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the second and third year to indicate the student's continued enrollment.

R277-602-4. School District or Charter School Responsibilities.

A. The school district or charter school that receives the student's scholarship application consistent with Section 53A-1a-704(4) shall forward applications to the Board no more than 10 days following receipt of the application.

B. The school district or charter school that received the student's scholarship application shall:

(1) receive applications from students/parents;

(2) verify enrollment of the student seeking a scholarship in previous school year within a reasonable time following contact by the Board;

(3) verify the existence of the student's IEP and level of service to the USOE within a reasonable time;

(4) provide personnel to participate on an assessment team to determine:

(a) if a student who was previously enrolled in a private school that has previously served students with disabilities would qualify for special education services if enrolled in a public school and the appropriate level of special education services which would be provided were the child enrolled in a public school for purposes of determining the scholarship amount consistent with Section 53A-1a-706(2);

(b) if a student previously receiving a special needs scholarship is entitled to receive the scholarship during the subsequent eligibility period.

C. Special needs scholarship students shall not be enrolled in public or charter schools for dual enrollment or extracurricular activities, consistent with the parents'/guardians' assumption of full responsibility for students' services under Section 53A-1a-704(5).

D. School districts and charter schools shall cooperate with the Board in cross-checking special needs scholarship student enrollment information, as requested by the Board.

E. School district and charter school notification to students with IEPs:

(1) School districts and charter schools shall provide written notice to parents or guardians of students who have an IEP of the availability of a scholarship to attend a private school through the Special Needs Scholarship Program.

(2) The written notice shall consist of the following statement: School districts and charter schools are required by Utah law, 53A-1a-704(10), to inform parents of students with IEPs enrolled in public schools, of the availability of a scholarship to attend a private school through the Carson Smith Scholarship Program. [~~Further information is available at www.schools.utah.gov/admin/specialneeds.htm.~~]

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(3) The written notice shall be provided no later than 30 days after the student initially qualifies for an IEP.

(4) The written notice shall be provided annually no later than February 1 to all students who have IEPs.

(5) The written notice shall include the address of the Internet website maintained by the Board, <http://www.schools.utah.gov/admin/specialneeds.htm>, that provides prospective applicants with detailed program information and application forms for the Carson Smith Scholarship Program.

(6) A school district, school within a school district, or charter school that has an enrolled student who has an IEP shall post the address of the Internet website maintained by the Board that provides prospective applicants with detailed program information and application forms for the Carson Smith Scholarship Program on the school district's or school's website, if the school district or school has one.

R277-602-5. State Board of Education Responsibilities.

A. The Board shall provide applications, containing acknowledgments required under Section 53A-1a-704(5), for parents seeking a special needs scholarship online, at the Board offices, at school district or charter school offices, and at charter schools no later than April 1 prior to the school year in which admission is sought.

B. The Board shall provide a determination that a private school meets the eligibility requirements of Section 53A-1a-705 as soon as possible but no more than 30 days after the private school submits an application and completed documentation of eligibility. The Board may:

(1) provide reasonable timelines within the application for satisfaction of private school requirements;

(2) issue letters of warning, require the school to take corrective action within a time frame set by the Board, suspend the school from the program consistent with Section 53A-1a-708, or impose such other penalties as the Board determines appropriate under the circumstances.

(3) establish appropriate consequences or penalties for private schools that:

(a) fail to provide affidavits under Section 53A-1a-708;

(b) fail to administer assessments, fail to report assessments to parents or fail to report assessments to assessment team under Section 53a-1a-705(1)(f);

(c) fail to employ teachers with credentials required under Section 53A-1a-705(g);

(d) fail to provide to parents relevant credentials of teachers under Section 53A-1a-705(h);

(e) fail to require completed criminal background checks under Section 53A-3-410(2) and take appropriate action consistent with information received.

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(4) initiate complaints and hold administrative hearings, as appropriate, and consistent with R277-602.

C. The Board shall make a list of eligible private schools updated annually and available no later than May 30 of each year.

D. Information about approved scholarships and availability and level of funding shall be provided to scholarship applicant parents/guardians no later than July 30 of each year.

E. The Board shall mail scholarships directly to private schools as soon as reasonably possible consistent with Section 53A-1a-706(8).

F. Beginning with the 2006-07 school year, the Board may begin scholarship payments to eligible private schools no earlier than July 1 but before payment dates established by Section 53A-1a-706(5)(a) if the parent/guardian negotiates a payment date with the USOE, provides reasonable advance notice to the USOE and assumes responsibility for transmission of the payment from the USOE to the private school.

G. If an annual legislative appropriation is inadequate to cover all scholarship applicants and documented levels of service, the Board shall establish by rule a lottery system for determining the scholarship recipients, with preference provided for under Section 53A-1a-706(1)(c)(i).

H. The Board shall verify and cross-check with school districts or charter school special needs scholarship student enrollment information consistent with Section 53A-1a-706(7).

R277-602-6. Responsibilities of Private Schools that Receive Special Needs Scholarships.

A. Private schools shall submit applications by May 1 prior to the school year in which it intends to enroll scholarship students.

B. Applications and appropriate documentation from private schools for eligibility to receive special needs scholarship students shall be provided to the USOE consistent with Section 53A-1a-705(3).

C. Private schools shall satisfy criminal background check requirements for employees and volunteers consistent with Section 53A-3-410.

D. Private schools that seek to enroll special needs scholarship students shall, in concert with the parent seeking a special needs scholarship for a student, initiate the assessment team meetings required under Sections 53A-1a-704(3) and 53A-1a-704(6).

(1) Meetings shall be scheduled at times and locations mutually acceptable to private schools, applicant parents and participating public school personnel.

(2) Designated private school and public school personnel shall maintain documentation of the meetings and the decisions made for the students.

(3) Documentation regarding required assessment team meetings,

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including documentation of meetings for students denied scholarships or services and students admitted into private schools and their levels of service, shall be maintained confidentially by the private and public schools, except the information shall be provided to the USOE for purposes of determining student scholarship eligibility, or for verification of compliance upon request by the USOE.

E. Private schools receiving scholarship payments under this rule shall provide complete student records in a timely manner to other private schools or public schools requesting student records if parents have transferred students under Section 53A-1a-704(7).

F. Private schools shall notify the Board within five days if:

(1) the student does not continue in enrollment in an eligible private school for any reason including parent/student choice, suspension or expulsion of the student; or

(2) the student misses more than 10 consecutive days of school.

G. Private schools shall satisfy health and safety laws and codes under Section 53A-1a-705(1)(d) including:

(1) the adoption of emergency preparedness response plans that include training for school personnel and parent notification for fire drills, natural disasters, and school safety emergencies and

(2) compliance with R392-200, Design, Construction, Operation, Sanitation, and Safety of Schools.

H. An approved eligible private school that changes ownership shall submit a new application for eligibility to receive Carson Smith scholarship payments from the Board; the application shall demonstrate that the school continues to meet the eligibility requirements of R277-602-6.

(1) The application for renewed eligibility shall be received from the school within 60 calendar days of the change of ownership.

(2) Ownership changes on the date that an agreement is signed between previous owner and new owner.

(3) If the application is not received by the USOE within the 60 days, the new owner/school is presumed ineligible to receive continued Carson Smith scholarship payments from the USOE and, at the discretion of the Board, the USOE may reclaim any payments made to a school within the previous 60 days.

(4) If the application is not received by the USOE within 60 days after the change of ownership, the school is not an eligible school and shall submit a new application for Carson Smith eligibility consistent with the requirements and timelines of R277-602.

R277-602-7. Special Needs Scholarship Appeals.

A. A parent or legal guardian of an eligible student or a parent or legal guardian of a prospective eligible student may appeal any final administrative decision under this rule. B. The

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Appeals Committee may not grant an appeal contrary to the statutory provisions of Section 53A-1a-701 through 53A-1a-710.

C. An appeal shall be submitted in writing to the USOE Special Needs Scholarship Coordinator at: Utah State Office of Education, 250 East 500 South, P.O. Box 144200, Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200.

(1) The appeal opportunity is expressly limited to a written appeal.

(2) Appellants have no right to additional elements of due process beyond the specific provisions of this rule.

(3) Nothing in the appeals process established under R277-602-8 shall be construed to limit, replace or adversely affect parental appeal rights available under IDEA.

D. Appeals shall be made within 15 days of written notification of the final administrative decision.

E. Appeals shall be considered by the Appeals Committee within 15 days of receipt of the written appeal.

F. The decision of the Appeals Committee shall be transmitted to parents no more than ten days following consideration by the Appeals Committee.

G. Appeals shall be finalized as expeditiously as possible in the joint interest of schools and students involved.

H. The Appeals Committee's decision is the final administrative action.

KEY: special needs students, scholarships

Date of Enactment or Last Substantive Amendment: [~~July 11, 2006~~] 2009

Authorizing, and Implemented or Interpreted Law: Art X Sec 3; 53A-1a-706(5) (b); 53A-3-410(6) (i) (c); 53A-1a-707; 53A-1-401(3)